

<b>Series:</b> Everyone Gets to Play	<b>Reference:</b> Ephesians 4:11-13 / Acts 4:13 / John 11:1 / Luke 22:42 / Galatians 3:8	<b>Title:</b> Everyone Gets to Play	<b>Date:</b> 09.30.18
<b>Website Writeup:</b> In looking to our models in kingdom life, we identify the compelling, ask them to show us how to do ministry, and become willing to give it all away ourselves!			

### Color changes in text indicate slide changes

*Eph. 4:11-13, <sup>11</sup>So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors & teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith & in the knowledge of the Son of God & become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

We've centered this series around these verses remembering, everyone's being equipped for ministry! From first breath to last & everyone in-between. No matter who you are, what you do, past or present circumstances. We're the Church, the very real body of Christ in a flesh & blood world, impacted by & intertwined with, a very real spiritual reality. The imperfect people, a perfect God uses to bring his kingdom of healing & peace to people. Ordinary folks with extraordinary knowledge & power. God's people being equipped for works of service building up the body of Christ attaining unity of faith in the knowledge of Jesus, becoming mature, moving towards fullness in Christ.

We can't expect our ministry to look like anyone else's. This is not unhealthy comparison of self. Everyone gets to play & we all have different parts, vocations, callings & personalities which are meaningful to God & reveal his heart to the world in a special way.

This process does include though, watching & learning from examples. **Looking for people who's experience is compelling.** Being around them. Watching how they live. As was seen in Acts 4:13 *"When they saw the courage of Peter & John & realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished & they took note that these men had been with Jesus."*

Seeing Peter & John doing the work of the Kingdom, people were astonished & impressed. Is there anyone you know who's been doing what Jesus did for a long time? People you see doing kingdom life & from whom you might learn?

This is one reason we value older people. Not just because of their age, but because they've walked with Jesus longer; old in age, old in faith. Who've not just grown old, but have grown up in faith as they've grown old. Not spiritual giants. Just regular good folks who've been in the presence of Jesus a long time, obedient to the Word, listening to the Spirit, exhibiting Jesus' ministry to others. Even if they've come to Christ at an older age, they have life experience, and I imagine they would have seen the finger of God in life long before their decision to follow him occurred.

Just more than a year ago, we began praying God would round out our age here at Six:Eight, which he's seen fit to do. We need examples. Not that older folks are perfect, actually because they haven't been! They've made their mistakes so that, possibly, we don't have to make the same, or at the least, not as badly. But it's not just their mistakes we learn from, it's also their ministry successes. The spiritually formative habits they've put in place because they've learned life works best when we walk with Jesus closely, listening to the directive voice of the Word & Spirit. We learn from their experience, stories & the wisdom they've gleaned over the years.

However this isn't just about faithful older Christians. There are those among us at younger ages who've walked well with the Lord, becoming for us models of ministry to emulate as well. This isn't an age thing, but a faith & spiritual formation thing. We're simply looking for people to learn from, who willingly sit in the presence of Jesus emulating his ministry over time. George Barna, evangelical sociologist & researcher, tells us that 60-70% of life/behavioral change in people is based upon finding someone they know & trust, and in watching what they do, imitate their behavior.

It's so fun, in my role as pastor, to watch this process of spiritual formation take place in our lives. I get to watch people hone their spiritual gifts, taking risk in ministry with others over the years. I'm now watching your kids come up, hearing what they're saying & doing for the sake of the kingdom! I hear teaching points regurgitated, words spoken by Spiritual Mentor, used now by Spiritual Mentee in ministry to a third person! Trainee become Trainer. Disciplee become Discipler. What we're building is overflowing in discipleship relationships all around us, as it should.

I said to Father Ian this week, it's such a fun time at Six:Eight to see the body ministering to one another & those outside our church as well. It's just too much fun; a blessing to see all that take shape as we attain the knowledge, unity, maturity & fullness of Jesus. We simply want more! Sitting in the presence of Jesus together, taking up his mantle of kingdom work to be done.

Since in listening to the words of *Acts 4:13* we quickly understand what made these disciples extraordinary in their ordinary lives. It wasn't their education, they were unschooled. It wasn't their wealth, social or political status, or power, they were ordinary guys. It was that they'd been in the presence of Jesus, that fact alone is what made them special. Something had rubbed off on them so to speak.

We had a meeting this past Tuesday night with the Elander's who're helping us to establish a Spiritual Mentoring Program at Six:Eight. A program in which people are trained to be spiritual mentors. A process to experience & learn from the formative practices & spiritual habits of those who've walked a little longer, or more closely, in the presence of Jesus, helping us to hear the voice of God in our lives. To aide us in discerning where the Lord's leading & working in life, so that we can engage with Jesus in ministry more readily. Faith & ministry are the legacies we pass on to children & those coming up behind us, either in age, or newness of faith.

As we identify compelling people, we need to ***ask them to show us how to do ministry.*** In John 11 Jesus is told about Lazarus who was sick - verse 1 begins, “*Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary & her sister Martha.*” Remembering last week, Jesus is about doing the Father’s business. Following the Father’s lead he chooses to go back, even to that place which was filled with threat for him. He waits 2 days before returning, and in that span, Lazarus died. You know the story - Jesus returned & raised Lazarus from the dead.

The disciples wanted to learn from Jesus, and had asked Him to teach them how to pray. Jesus not only taught them to pray, but brought them along as He healed the sick & even, in this case, raised the dead. Take risks. Try new ways of ministering. Come alongside those doing ministry! Tag along as they do it. You’ll find they’re excited to share.

I’m trying to develop new habits I’ve seen in others, like praying for people on the spot whenever the Spirit leads me. In restaurants. Shopping malls. The store. Wherever I get into conversation with someone & the Spirit nudges me, I want to say yes. So I ask, “Can I pray for you right now?” And do so on the spot. I want to make this a habitual part of my life - that my mind’s always trained to listen to the Spirit’s lead, and take action when I hear it. Becoming less concerned about the details of my life, and more concerned about the details of what God may be doing right in front of me.

When I was first a Christian, I remember how odd it was to pray out loud in a Bible study with others. Or, when Tony Melvin, my original discipler, would say, “Let’s pray about that right now,” sitting in a car in front of my house. It was so out of the ordinary. Awkward. Intimate. Unnerving. But I learned from guys like Tony how to practice my faith in ministry to others. And I began doing these things with others.

Then as I got older I fell into the trap of just saying to people, “I’ll pray for you,” walking away, leaving opportunity behind. Until later in life, God put me around people who prayed for anyone at the drop of the hat. And the Vineyard which habitually practices the question, “Can I pray for you right now?” Then does it! Or, Christians who’ve taken risk to pray healing over a person in the moment. I’ve seen healing occur as a result. It’s powerful. I needed these people in my life who’ve walked with Jesus teaching me the basics, modeling, providing opportunity for me to get past fear & insecurity. Forcing me into an environment where I have to think beyond myself into the real need of others & what God may be doing in them. To step out into the risk of active faith where I have to trust God will meet us in the moment! We want a church culture which lives in risky faith like this, never taking the safe road, but stepping out for the sake of kingdom-life in others.

***And in the kingdom-life we have to be ready to give it all away. We’re spectators to that process in Jesus life as we read his anguished words in Luke 22:42, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”***

Jesus' first & foremost concern is, the Father's will's carried out, even when it meant his excruciating death. People like Stanley Albert Dale lived to this end. Stanley gave his life taking the Gospel to cannibalistic tribes in Irian Jaya. Tribes who worshipped a spirit called Kembu which kept them in constant fear & warfare.

Stanley arrived in the middle of a war between two people groups in a valley. Facing hundreds of hostile warriors Stanley walked between them holding up his hands. They put down their spears & made peace. After four years in that valley, hundreds trusted in Jesus. He then approached another tribe, in his first & only encounter, they shot him with more than 60 arrows. Stanley just kept pulling the arrows out dropping them at his feet while preaching Jesus. He died that day. They dismembered his body fearing he'd get up again. Although they killed him, his witness had filled them with awe.

Years later a missionary boy was found by one of Stanley's murderers in a plane crash & rescued because the tribesman thought Stanley had died with such honor & wanted to know why. That boy was a foothold, as his presence opened the way for other missionaries to bring the Gospel.

With people like Stanley, we stand confident, God's promises remain even in the face of death. The same God Who blessed Abraham, Isaac & Jacob will continue to bless the Church today. Because it's not about us, it's about Jesus - we don't do ministry for us, we do it to bring glory to Jesus by way of the sacrifice of our lives, living out his promises under blessing & grace! I doubt any of you will get to the point of losing your life for Jesus, at worst you might encounter a little rejection. But these people, even from afar are an encouragement. For someone to be an example to us, it can even just be through reading about their lives, or hearing about them third person. Stories abound.

We notice as Jesus sent out the 12 in Luke 9, and then the 72 in Luke 10, to 'preach the kingdom & heal the sick', he restricted them on what to bring. Although that's not prescriptive to all ministry, maybe it's a mental image as to what a person living the kingdom life will naturally become; a person less concerned with creature comforts. Less attached to things which they've falsely relied on for identity in the past. Less concerned with self & more with Jesus' message of peace, reconciliation & healing among people.

Kingdom-minded Christians become more enamored with Jesus' ministry as they delve deeper into relationship with him. People living in open vulnerability to others, and in deep trust in Christ in all things spiritual & physical! Kingdom advancement trumps self-preservation, not in an unhealthy fanatical way, but in a deep conviction of what is a real biblical world-view, pushing out all things contrary to it. False views of finances, lifestyle, sexuality, etc., all are reordered as they come under obedience to Jesus created order & we find peace & freedom. The pressures of career subside as prestige & worldly power become less important. Sexuality becomes a worshipful experience instead of a false identity driven by self gratification. Money & career become seen for what they

truly are, maybe meaningful opportunities, but definitely very real means to sustain & do kingdom ministry.

Even relationships take the proper perspective, as we become reliant on the perfect nature of Jesus instead of the imperfect nature of those around us. That's when relationships become healthy, since we're not striving to get something we can't from others, but can only get in Christ. When we bask in the presence of Jesus, all pressure is taken off relationships since we're not manipulating each other to get what we think we need from human interaction. The fear of man - released. The power of sinful behavior - abolished. Binding insecurities - broken, as the Spirit overtakes all we are, bringing us deeper into the understanding of the Word, and our role in the kingdom.

Jesus, and His disciples throughout history, have always had to be ready to give everything they had & loved for the Gospel. The 12 Disciples gave all they had, all but one martyred for their faith. God's with you, even when giving your all is hard. As you give of yourself, not only will you be taken care of, you'll be blessed immeasurably as you're carried on to completion in Christ (Ph 1:6).

Gal. 3:28 says, *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male & female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* Think you're disqualified from playing, or that someone else is, on the Kingdom field? Think again. We're all one in Christ, and He has unique things for each to do – including you! Because we're all being *built up until we all reach unity in the faith & in the knowledge of the Son of God & become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

As John Wimber said, *'The test of spiritual maturity is...the ability to love God & others. Learning to serve others by loving the Unlovely, the Less Fortunate, the Lost, and the Broken. This is the highest call...'*